

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0736

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES NIACT IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 7664

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PFOR SHUM CI

SUBJECT: EXPULSION OF DEMOCRATIC LEADERS

REF: SANTIAGO 7662

1. SUMMARY: CHILEAN SECURITY AGENTS DETAINED TWO PROMINENT CHILEAN LAWYERS AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL FIGURES LATE AUGUST 6 AND WHISKED THEM OFF TO A COMMERCIAL FLIGHT FOR BUENOS AIRES, KEPT WAITING FOR THAT PURPOSE. THE OFFICIAL GOC ANNOUNCEMENT SAID THE PAIR HAD REPEATEDLY BROKEN THE POLITICAL RECESS AND PLEDGED THE GOC WOULD TAKE SIMILAR STEPS AGAINST ANYONE ELSE WHO DARED TO ENGAGE IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY OR SUBVERSION. A FEW HOURS LATER THE UNDER SECRETARY OF INTERIOR TOLD AN APPEALS COURT, WHICH HAD REQUESTED A STAY OF THE EXPULSION ORDER WHILE IT CONSIDERED A HABEAS CORPUS PETITION, THAT THE PAIR WAS ALREADY OUT OF THE COUNTRY. IN ITS HARSHLY WORDED ANNOUNCEMENT, THE GOVERNMENT GAVE NO SPECIFICS WHATEVER TO JUSTIFY ITS DECISION; BUT ITS ACTION WAS CLEARLY BASED ON RECENT ACTIVITIES OF THE TWO LAWYERS MANIFESTING DISSENT. OBVIOUSLY, THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO KEEP THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL LID CLAMPED ON, REGARDLESS OF INTERNATIONAL REACTION. END SUMMARY.

2. SECURITY AGENTS DETAINED EURENIO VELASCO LETELIER AT 1715 AUGUST 6 AS THE LAWYER WAS LEAVING THE COURT BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN SANTIAGO. AT 1730 THEY PICKED UP JAIME CASTILLO VELASCO AT HIS
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HOME. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOFTS, BOTH WERE HUSTLED OFF DIRECTLY

TO PUDAHUEL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND PLACED ABOARD A LAN CHILE COMMERCIAL FLIGHT FOR BUENOS AIRES. THE FLIGHT, SCHEDULED TO DEPART AT 1800, WAS HELD A FEW MINUTES TO PUT THE EXPELLEES ABOARD.

3. THE GOC ISSUED A STATEMENT FOLLOWING THE ARREST (SEE SEPTTEL OF FULL TEXT). THE ANNOUNCEMENT SAID THAT THE PAIR CONSTITUTED A "DANGER TO THE INTERNAL SECURITY OF THE STATE AND THAT THE GOC'S ACTIONS WERE TAKEN WITHIN THE LEGAL NORMS NOW OBTAINING IN CHILE (I.E., STATE OF SIEGE). IT ACCUSED THE TWO OF REPEATED ACTIONS AIMED AT "SERIOUSLY THREATENING PUBLIC TRANQUILITY AND DOMESTIC ORDER." THE GOC SAID THAT IT WOULD "UNHESITATINGLY" TAKE SIMILAR STEPS AGAINST ANYONE VIOLATING THE BAN ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND WOULD "ENFORCE THE CONCEPT OF AUTHORITY INFLEXIBLY AND PERMANENTLY." IT WANTED THE CITIZENRY NOT TO BE TAKEN IN BY ACCOUNTS ATTEMPTING TO MINIMIZE THE SERIOUSNESS OF CASTILLO'S AND VELASCO'S ACTIONS.

4. LAWYERS FOR THE TWO EXPELLEES PRESENTED HABEAS CORPUS (AMPARO) PETITIONS BEFORE THE SANTIAGO COURT OF APPEALS BY 1800. THE COURT ABOUT 2100 DECIDED TO REQUEST THE GOVERNMENT TO STAY ACTION AGAINST THE PAIR UNTIL THE CASE HAD BEEN STUDIED. WHEN INFORMED OF THE COURT'S DECISION, UNDER SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR ENRIQUE MONTERO REPLIED THAT THE PAIR ALREADY HAD BEEN EXPELLED.

5. COMMENT BOTH MEN HAD RECENTLY FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN MANIFESTATIONS OF DISSENT. EURENIO VELASCO HAS ASSUMED COMMAND OF THE RADICAL LEFTIST PARTY (PIR) WHILE TITULAR HEAD LUIS BOSSAY RECOVERED FROM A PROSTATE OPERATION. VELASCO HAD JUST PARTICIPATED IN A MEETING IN CARACAS OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATS FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES IN WHICH, ALONG WITH EXILED CHILEAN RADICALS, HE SOUGHT SUPPORT FROM GERMAN AND VENEZUELAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. (NOTE: PIR IS SOMETHING OF A MISNOMER. THIS CENTER GROUP OF THE OLD RADICAL PARTY HAD SPLIT OFF AFTER THE MAIN BODY OF THE RADICALS JOINED THE ALLENDE POPULAR UNITY MOVEMENT. ANTI-MARXIST, THE GROUP HAD BEEN IN THE PROCESS OF REMAINING THEMSELVES A SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AT THE TIME OF THE 1973 COUP.) VELASCO HAD DEFENDED HIMSELF SUCCESSFULLY FROM A GOC ATTEMPT IN LATE 1974 TO PUNISH HIM FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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SHARP CRITICISM OF THE GOC HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. HE WAS ALSO ONE OF FIVE PROMINENT LAWYERS WHO SUBMITTED A LENGTHY BRIEF CONDEMNING GOC HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES TO OAS FOREIGN MINISTERS ATTENDING THE VI OASGA IN JUNE. DURING A CONVERSATION, THIS WAS WITH EMBOFFS, VELASCO MADE NO SECRET OF HIS INVOLVEMENT IN EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A MOVEMENT INVOLVING VARIOUS CENTER-DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS TO PRESENT A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE CURRENT REGIME.

6. JAMIME CASTILLO, ALSO A DRAFTER OF THE OAS GA PETITION, HAS LONG BEEN IDENTIFIED AS THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT'S IDEOLOGUE-IN-RESIDENCE. PHILOSOPHICALLY ON THE LEFT OF THE PDC'S CURRENT LEADERSHIP, CASTILLO HAD SERVED TO STEM THE DEFECTION OF SOME CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS TO THE VARIOUS LEFT-WING CHRISTIAN SPLINTER GROUPS, COLLABORATE WITH MARXIST GROUPS. HE IS AN EFFECTIVE AND PERENNIAL GADFLY WHOSE LEGAL ARGUMENTATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS MUST REPEATEDLY HAVE STUNG THE AUTHORITIES. HE HAD KEPT THE PRESSURE ON THE JUNTA IN A VARIETY OF WAYS, AND LIKE VELASCO, DEVOTED MUCH OF HIS RECENT LEGAL PRACTICE TO DEFENDING DETAINEES. BOTH HAD PARTICIPATED IN DRAFTING RECENT LAWYER'S LETTER PROTESTING THE DETENTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER HERNAN MONTEALEGRE.

7. MECHANICALLY AND IN TERMS OF GOC MOTIVATION, THE EXPULSION BEARS A STRONG RESEMBLANCE TO THE WAY THE GOC EXILED LEFTWING PDC LEADER RENAN FUENTEALBA IN NOVEMBER 1974. FUENTEALBE HAD ALSO EXPRESSED HIMSELF FREELY, IN WRITING, AND THIS EVENTUALLY LED THE GOVERNMENT TO EXPEL HIM SUMMARILY, WITHOUT EVEN TIME TO PACK A TOOTHBRUSH, REGARDLESS OF DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN REACTION.

8. BUT THERE IS A VERY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO CASE. UNLIKE FUENTEALBA, WHO FAVORED THE ORGANIZATION OF A COALITION OF THE LEFT MUCH LIKE THE POPULAR UNITY MOVEMENT (UP), CASTILLO AND VELASCO SYMBOLIZE THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER. THEIR POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE IS A MILITARY/CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD EXCLUDE UP ELEMENTS, IN A MOVEMENT TOWARD THE RESTORATION OF A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM IN CHILE. THE PAIR'S IMPECCABLE ANTI-ALLENDE CREDENTIALS MAKE IT ALL THE MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOC TO EVOKE POPULAR SUPPORT FOR ITS CLAIMS THAT THEY WERE SUBVERSIVES.

WE DOUBT EITHER ONE ENGAGED IN "SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY" AS NORMALLY DEFINED.

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9. THE IMPACT OF THE PRESENT CASE IN CHILE MAY BE PROFOUND. CASTILLO AND VELASCO ARE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MAINSTREAM DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS OF CHILEAN SOCIETY. INDEED, PDC LEADER AND EX-PRESIDENT EDUARDO FREI, WHO NORMALLY DOES NOT INTERVENE PUBLICLY IN THESE MATTERS, JOINED PDC LAWYERS AT THE APPEALS COURT IN SEEKING TO STAY THE EXPULSION. THE PDC SAW TO IT THAT THIS AND OTHER EMBASSIES WERE INFORMED OF THE ARRESTS LESS THAN AN HOUR AFTER THEY OCCURRED.

10. WE EXPECT THE HARSH, IMPLACABLE CHARACTER OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT AND ACTION TO HAVE AN INTIMIDATING EFFECT, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY. THE ACTION IS CERTAINLY ANOTHER REBUFF FOR THE ELEMENTS IN CHILE WHICH HAD BEEN ANTICIPATING SOME BROADENING OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLITICAL BASE. IT WILL FURTHER INHIBIT ANY OPEN CRITICISM IN THE POLITICAL AREA. BUT IT WILL ALSO IF ANYTHING INCREASE THE INTERNAL TENSIONS IN CONTEMPORARY CHILEAN SOCIETY.

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